

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 PC-04 EB-11 COME-00 CAB-09 FAA-00

DRC-01 /171 W

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R 181045Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 340

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 3113

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAVN, ECON, CE, MV, IN

SUBJ: THE MALDIVES REACHES OUT

REF: COLOMBO 2583 (NOTAL), COLOMBO 2215 (NOTAL)

1. FOR PAST FEW YEARS, GOVT OF MALDIVES

HAS BEEN CAUTIOUSLY SEEKING TO DIVERSIFY MALDIVIAN
ECONOMY (FORMERLY ALMOST COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON FISHING
AND DRIED FISH EXPORTS TO SRI LANKA) AND TO REDUCE
MALDIVIAN DEPENDENCE ON SRI LANKA FOR TRADE AND BANKING
FACILITIES. SUCCESSES HAVE INCLUDED A RAPIDLY EXPANDING
MALDIVIAN MERCHANT SHIPPING FLEET WHICH CURRENTLY HAS
46 SHIPS, TOURIST RESORT BUSINESS IN MALE SATOLL, AND AN
AGREEMENT FOR MALDIVIAN FISHERMEN TO SELL FRESH FISH CATCH
DIRECTLY TO JAPANESE COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS, TO COMPEN-
SATE FOR SHARP DECLINE IN TRADITIONAL DRIED FISH EXPORTS
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TO SRI LANKA OWING TO CEYLONese FOREIGN EXCHANGE

PROBLEMS.

2. RECENT DIPLOMATIC BROUHAHAS (REFTELS) BETWEEN MALDIVIANS AND CEYLONESE APPEAR TO HAVE GIVEN ADDED IMPETUS TO MALDIVIAN EFFORTS REDUCE RELIANCE ON SRI LANKA. DECISION TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL AIRLINE (COLOMBO 2956 NOTAL) AND EARLY NOV VISIT BY INDIAN DELEGATION CONSISTING OF OFFICIALS FROM INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION COLOMBO, STATE BANK OF INDIA (SBI), INDIAN AIRLINES, AND DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS ARE LATEST EXAMPLES OF MALDIVIAN PUSH OUTWARD. PURPOSE OF INDIAN VISIT WAS REPORTEDLY TO DISCUSS OPENING OF SBI BRANCH IN MALE, ESTABLISHMENT OF DIRECT AIR ROUTE BETWEEN INDIA AND MALDIVES, AND INSTALLATION OF DIRECT TELECOMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN BOMBAY AND MALE. EARLIER THERE WERE REPORTS THAT GOM WAS THINKING OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC OFFICES IN INDIA.

3. CEYLONESE ARE BELATEDLY ATTEMPTING TO PATCH THINGS UP. FRIENDLY GESTURES INCLUDE: PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S AGREEMENT TO ALLOW HER SRI LANKA AIR FORCE (SLAF) COMMANDER, PADDY MENDIS, TO ACT AS ADVISER TO INFANT AIR MALDIVES (COLOMBO 2956); GOODWILL VISIT BY CEYLONESE GUNBOATS AND FLAGSHIP WHICH SRI LANKA NAVY (SLN) COMMANDER TOLD AMB WOUPI YKE PLACE IN JAN; AND VISIT BY CEYLONESE MDFA DELEGATION DEC 1 LED BY SECTY W.T. JAYASINGHE, ACCOMPANIED BY MDFA DIRECTOR-GENERAL VERNON MENDIS, MDFA, DIRECTOR FOR ASIA/AFRICA, AND SLAF COMMANDER.

4. MALDIVIAN AMB TOLD EMBOFF THAT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS COULD OCCUR ONLY IF CHARGES AGAINST ALI MANIKU, DIRECTOR OF MALDIVIAN NATIONAL TRADE CORP, WERE DROPPED AND MONEY CONFISCATED FROM HIM BY GSL RETURNED TO GOM. SLAF COMMANDER TOLD US BEFORE DEC 1 TRIP THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WAS BASIS FOR PAPERING OVER DIFFERENCES. HOWEVER, VERNON MENDIS, SINCE HIS RETURN FROM MALDIVIES, STATED TO DCM THAT SUBJECT OF ALI MANIKU'S CURRENCY CONTROL VIOLATION
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WAS NOT RAISED DURING VISIT AND THAT THERE IS NOTHING BUT "BOUNDLESS LOVE" BETWEEN CEYLONESE AND MALDIVIANS. CLEARLY, EITHER MODUS VIVENDI HAS BEEN FOUND TO SOLVE MANIKU'S PROBLEM OR MENDIS WAS NOT BEING CANDID IN HIS DESCRIPTION OF VISIT.

5. MALDIVIAN ATTEMPTS TO CUT LOOSED FROM SRI LANKA ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE BOTH BECAUSE OF SRI LANKA'S INABILITY TO BE

USEFUL TO MALDIVES OWING TO FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. CEYLONSE,
HOWEVER, ARE ALSO LIKELY TO RESENT MALDIVIAN EFFORTS
TO ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT LINKS, PARTICULARLY WITH
INDIANS, WHOM THE CEYLONSE INHERENTLY DISTRUST.
ADDED MINOR IRRITANT IN INDIA-CEYLONE RELATIONS MIGHT
RESULT. NEVERTHELESS, MALDIVIANS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
PURSUE THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT WAY, WHICH SO FAR HAS
BROUGHT THEM NOTHING BUT SUCCESS.
VAN HOLLEN

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